

LOCAL SOLDIER HELPS

BUILD TOKYO ROAD

June 27, 1945

JAMES E. BOLDREY SENDS FATHER REPORT ON WORK AT OKINAWA

James E. Boldrey, Metalsmith 1/c who is a Sea Bee in the 71st Battalion writes his father Ira Boldrey of Bogota the following:

I am sending a little summary of some of our accomplishments since I have been here. I work with the water distillation unit all the time on these jobs till my shop is set up for operation or I should say, 'till we have a chance to set it up

This is the first time we have ever been able to send anything like this home. It will give you an idea of about what our job is anyway.

The Okinawa Report in which the Seabee Correspondents and Photographers give their word and picture impressions of some of the different happenings at the back door to Japan, follows:

Closest to Tokyo:

There's one Seabee outfit that can boast, literally, that it is building a road to Tokyo.

This is the Battalion that advanced northward with the lightning drive of the Marines. The unit has built and maintained a network of supply roads for the northern part of the island—a network that points directly towards the Jap home islands.

Because of their assignment to the northward-driving Marines, men of the Battalion are the Seabees closest to Tokyo.

First ashore on L-Day was a giant bulldozer assigned to Marine artillery. The big cat, with a three-operator team to insure continuous activity, hauled 155 mm. Long Tom from the beach to its forward position. The crew remained with the artillery for a week working on emplacements as the front rapidly advanced in the northern drive.

The first half of the battalion came ashore the morning of L-Day plus one—rushed into emergency jobs that has to be done before heavy equipment could be gotten on the beach. The unexpectedly swift advances of the Marines had given the unloading of fuel, rations and ammunition the top priority.

Equipped with little more than hand tools, and working under incessant air raids and spasmodic sniper fire that took a toll of six casualties, the men fought mud to establish temporary beach roads, threw up the III Corps' command post and dug an emergency fuel dump revetment. Hiking five miles under full pack, they established their first campsite at Irammiya, east of the Yontan airfield.

When the balance of the Battalion and the heavy equipment were finally gotten ashore L-Day plus six, these Seabees' primary job got underway. Working round the clock in six-hour shifts, they are widening, draining, building and maintaining more than 30 miles of road, aiming straight at target Tokyo. On these stretches of native highways, 20 bridges, blasted by the demolition of retreating Japs were shored up and repaired.

Working in high gear and constantly in the presence of enemy elements, taking time out only to establish their second camp 20 miles farther north, other tasks so essential to the Marine advance which fell to the outfit, include: the construction of the III Corps medical battalion hospital complete with bomb shelters; the erection of a second Marine command post at the new front; the building and surfacing of a cub plane strip at Onna; the operation of cranes and lighting units at Marine unloading beaches; the location and digging of hard-to-find coral for use on airfields; the operation of two water distillation units producing a combined total of more than 30,000 gallons of pure water daily.